

**VOICES: If you are encouraging someone to practice this Buddhism who says he or she believes in a supreme being, what do you say?**

*Members from L.A. #2 Joint Territory respond:*

I say: “God is the same thing we refer to as the Mystic Law. It is the benevolent, protective source of all life throughout the universe. We do not see this force as embodied in a human-like form but as a great, sweeping rhythm of life that is manifest in everything throughout the cosmos — within us and around us. If you can relinquish the notion of a person who is watching you and judging and taking care of you, you will discover the freedom of Buddhism. You will see how your life embodies the Buddha or God-like nature.” I would then advise them to chant for the wisdom to joyfully understand this concept.

— NATALIE BATES, Los Angeles

I say that in Buddhism we believe in a universal law. And although we don’t treat it like a person, it is a law that governs things. It is the rhythm of nature itself, so certainly we believe in a universal presence and order based on this law. In Buddhism, we believe that we are a part of this universal law, and that it is part of us. Because we are part of this universal law, we can use our Buddhist practice to tap into it to change our lives in a positive way.

— AL ALBERGATE, Hermosa Beach, Calif.

If your notion of God is a personified entity, who created us and more or less controls our destiny, you may have difficulty accepting the Buddhist concept of absolute freedom and responsibility. But if your notion of God represents a force in the universe that is manifest in all life, that you can discover and cultivate through your efforts, your belief is in harmony with Buddhist philosophy. In either case, if you chant about this question, you will discover a solution that will make you happy.

— JOHN BATES, Los Angeles

I still believe in God. I believe that God is the force that is in me and in the universe that I am existing in. And I guess the “God energy” that I use to chant with is the same energy that comes back from the Gohonzon and that manifests in my life experience. It’s a universal God energy and the Gohonzon is a mirror of that.

— KELLY WALSH, North Hollywood, Calif.

I would say that Buddhism comes from the inside, not the outside. In other words, we don’t look outside ourselves for this. Then I would have to say that we don’t have a God. We chant to bring out our best nature. All religions have as a bottom line for us to be good, happy people, and this is how we do it.

— BETTY DUNN, Inglewood, Calif.